

## Times Your Community

## Selling Muni Water still not a wise move

By Councilmember  
Rose Herrera

*Special to the Times*  
The city's on-going budget problems require innovative solutions.

As a former business owner and entrepreneur, I am a proponent of creative ideas and finding innovative solutions to close the budget gap. The proposal to sell San Jose Municipal Water System (SJMWS) however is short-sighted and risks the city losing control of our water supply, a vital resource critical to our city's survival.

The San Jose Water Company has presented the city with a letter of intent to acquire the San Jose Municipal Water system. The Water Company is an institution, one that has been in business for 143 years and provides water to one million people in the Bay Area. The water company has offered a hefty sum of roughly \$50 million to buy SJMWS. But that carrot dangling in front of us would create a private monopoly on water here in San Jose, dramatically increase rates for District 8 residents and potentially increase rates for everyone citywide.

This would be the eighth time the city has pursued this strategy. The most recent attempt was in 2002 when the city spent one and a half years and millions of tax payer dollars with the end result being a decision to not move forward. The same reasons for not doing it then exist now.

Most large cities own their water utility and would never consider selling it to the highest bidder. A serious consequence of a sale to a private company is the city would lose access to Hetch Hetchy water, widely regarded by residents and businesses as high quality, pure water. Alviso receives 100 percent of its water from Hetch Hetchy. Once access to water from the Hetch Hetchy reservoir is lost, we will never regain it. There is a long line of municipalities waiting to take our place if we are foolish enough to give it up.

Usually when a city considers

selling a utility it would be because it is poorly run and losing money. That is not the case with Muni Water. It is one of the best run and well-maintained water systems around. Unlike other Departments of the city Muni Water has no unfunded maintenance liability. We have invested and maintained our water infrastructure and would lose this investment if we sell it.

In the past we were able to transfer a rate of return from the Water Utility Fund, an Enterprise Fund, to the General Fund. In 1996, California voters passed

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Prop. 218 called the "Right to Vote on Taxes Act." This proposition requires that property related fees can only be used for the purposes for which the fee was collected. In the case of Muni Water, monies collected from rate payers go into an Enterprise Fund for the operation of Muni Water and can only be used for that purpose. The fees collected cannot exceed cost recovery.

It is easy to see why a sale would be appealing to those who believe that the funds from the sale of this utility would be able to be used for the General Fund. However, under Prop. 218, the same question would exist, whether the proceeds of the sales could be legally transferred to the General Fund.

On Aug. 30, I hosted a District 8 Community Meeting that was open to all residents and businesses to discuss the future of the San Jose Municipal Water system. It was well attended by residents from all corners of our community, including KONA, Meadowfair, Evergreen Village Square, The Villages, Meadowslands, and the District 8 Community Roundtable.

As a direct result of the community feedback from that meeting, I was able to slow down the



### District 8 Report

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City Councilmember

process and convince the City Manager's Office to re-examine its position. The report with realigned findings is now scheduled to be made public in late September and heard at the City's Rules Committee on Oct. 6 and to the City Council on Oct. 26. I'm happy to say that many other options will come forward in the manager's report. My office will distribute this report as soon as it becomes available.

I have heard one message loud and clear from residents and businesses: releasing control of the municipal water system is unwise. One resident shared this thought, "We need to see and treat this issue as a very serious problem that cannot be under estimated for our and future generations to come." I completely agree. Valin Corporation's President and CEO, Joseph Nettemeyer, spoke for thousands of water customers when he said, "Our short term problems require cuts in spending not loss of control over a vital asset such as water."

Some residents have contacted my office with additional concerns that the city may not have properly returned money owed to Evergreen residents in the early days after the passage of Proposition 218; you can rest assured that I take these concerns seriously and I will diligently pursue the issue to ensure that we receive the fair treatment we deserve under the law.

I need your help to keep our water service with SJMWS. Please send me your questions and comments. We need to work towards fiscal health without selling the assets that keep San Jose vital.

Please feel free to contact my office with your concerns with this or other city issues by calling (408) 535-4908 or emailing district8@sanjoseca.gov.

Save the date! Day in the Park is Saturday, Oct. 2 at Lake Cunningham Park

Stay connected! Sign up for the District 8 Newsletter: [www.sanjoseca.gov/district8](http://www.sanjoseca.gov/district8).

## Veterinarian

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throughout and to the end of your pet's life.

As soon as you acquire a pet, you should develop a relationship with a veterinarian so that you have a "family vet." You should have your vet examine your pet within 1-2 weeks of bringing your pet home. This allows your vet to be introduced to your new family member and to establish a baseline by which to compare should your pet develop any problems. You vet can also serve as a resource to provide advice about feeding, grooming, training, etc. It's also advisable to have a relationship with a veterinarian that you trust before a problem develops and you find you must go to the first veterinarian you can get in to see.

Your pets should have an annual exam with your family vet, while geriatric pets may require more visits, even if you don't sense any problems or health issues. By seeing your pet at least annually, your family vet may be able to detect problems in the very early stages providing a diagnosis and treatment that may be minor versus waiting until a problem is so advanced that the cost for diagnosis and treatment becomes a burden. Animals' needs for nutrition, activity, disease prevention, etc. changes with age, your veterinarian can advise you on how best to meet these



changes if they can see how your pet is aging on a regular basis.

### How to choose a veterinarian?

Yellow pages, web search, family/friends/neighbors' recommendations

What's important to you...location and hours, practice size, clinic staff attitude, vet's experience, pet's preference, other?

Someone you trust and you and your pet are comfortable with

### Why should you have a family vet?

Familiarity with your pet's normal/healthy self

Resource for pet nutrition, behavior and training, grooming, and of course medical and preventative care

A veterinarian that you trust should a problem arise with your pet

### When to visit the family vet?

As soon as you acquire a pet

Before problems arise

At least annually for exams and early disease detection

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## Milestones

A new section in the Evergreen Times will publish births, marriages, engagements, obituaries and business announcements. These paid notices announce the milestones in your lives to the Evergreen community. Cost \$150 for 200 words, \$25 for photo.

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